



**NZ College of Clinical Psychologists**

*Te Whare Wānanga o te Mātauranga Hinengaro*

6<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Hon Erica Stanford, Minister for Education

Dear Minister Stanford,

**Re: Current funding settings limit the training of Clinical Psychologists.**

Many congratulations on your own re-election to parliament and National's overall election victory. We are pleased to welcome you to government and, personally, to your Education portfolio.

Alongside welcoming you to your role, we are writing to draw your attention to a number of priority areas affecting the training of our mental health workforce- in particular, the Clinical Psychology workforce. We have copied this letter to your colleague, Minister Doocey in his role as Minister for Mental Health, however the issues we are raising fall within the Education portfolio.

**Politicians across the house have acknowledged the need to train more clinical psychologists**

As you will be aware, there have been a large number of reports in the press in recent year relating to the [chronic shortage of Clinical Psychologists](#) in the NZ workforce. Prior to the Election, we were pleased that the [NZ National Party committed to doubling the number of clinical psychology training places](#), however this policy is likely to require some considerable co-ordination across both Health and Education Ministries to deliver.

**Clinical Psychology training requires at least a master's-level qualification**

Clinical psychology is a post-graduate training, which follows an undergraduate qualification in general psychology. This is in considerable contrast to most other health professions, such as physiotherapy, nursing, occupational therapy, or even medicine, which are delivered at an undergraduate level. To qualify as a clinical psychologist, our students are required to have completed at least a Master's level qualification (typically two years following an honours year) and, both locally and internationally, it would be common to train psychologists to a doctoral level (typically 3 years).

**Clinical psychology training courses are frequently not economically viable.**

Training a clinical psychologist is intensive and requires relatively high levels of teaching staff and lecture space, compared to undergraduate training. Due to the intensity of training students, courses have advised us that they are unable to gain the same 'economies of scale' that can be achieved with undergraduate courses, where student-to-staff ratios can be much higher.

**The current funding settings do not prioritise training practitioner psychologists.**

Most clinical psychology training is currently funded by TEC at the same level as a general science qualification ([DQ7+ funding category W](#)), with funding set at \$20,333p.a. for a taught post-graduate programme in 2023. Training that does not lead to registration as a psychologist (e.g. Master of Neuroscience) attracts the same level of funding, even though the vocational training (e.g. Master of Clinical Psychology) is much more resource-intensive.

Furthermore, not only is the funding level below that offered for other health professions such as pharmacy and optometry (\$23,111p.a.) and significantly below that of comparable medical training (\$51,271p.a. for undergraduate training or \$31,463p.a. for post-graduate courses), it is also significantly below the levels set for other post-graduate studies such as agricultural and horticultural studies (\$30,864p.a.).

**The current settings are likely to limit our ability to expand clinical psychology training**

As you are aware, the majority of NZ Universities are [currently facing significant financial difficulties](#). As a result, several of our training providers have indicated that the Universities are not willing to increase the size of their training programmes, due to the relatively high cost of delivery and low level of funding.

**Our organisation is keen to support the government in delivering on its plan to double the number of clinical psychology training places**

The shortage of clinical psychologists in New Zealand represents a major challenge for the incoming government. As an organisation, we are very keen to support your efforts to increase the numbers of psychologists that we train in New Zealand and would appreciate the opportunity to engage with your Ministry, as well as your colleagues working in (Mental) Health.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Paul Skirrow  
Strategic Advisor NZCCP



Angus Maxwell  
President NZCCP



Tricia Stuart  
President NZCCP

c.c. Hon Matt Dooney, Minister of Mental Health

cc. Hon Shane Reti, Minister of Health